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Main Issues of Substance1. How to Prevent Communist Control of Laos by Political Means?

Denial of complete political control to the Communists will be difficult as long as they retain military control of half of Laos and could seize the rest. Seeing their position unchallengeable on all fronts, they may expect to negotiate a settlement at Geneva assuring them eventual complete control. If not at the Conference table alone, they probably believe they can maneuver with political elements to achieve a coalition government which they can dominate. These tactics failing, they see early elections as their vehicle to power because of their superior organization for persuasion and coercion throughout Laos.

Our hope to check these moves lies in four possible courses of action:

- 1) If the Boun Oun Government or something similar can be retained during the Conference, we should first see whether control mechanisms can be negotiated to assure a reasonably neutral Laos and whether the Communists appear to accept a genuine neutralization of Laos.
- 2) If Souvanna becomes head of government before or during the Conference, and is anxious to develop pressures to counter those he has submitted to from the Communists, we should help him providing he is willing to accept conditions which would perpetuate real neutrality.
- 3) If a neutral Laos becomes obviously illusory, we should attempt to place the blame on the Communist bloc and seek a rationale for direct military intervention.
- 4) Should military intervention at that time be impossible, we should seek a Federation formula in Laos which would permit the retention of at least Southern Laos and a neutralization of the Northwest. This maneuver may require limited military support and possibly national assembly action.

2. How to strengthen the neighbors of Laos through the Conference.

Thailand and Free Viet-Nam are already shaken by the deterioration of events in Laos. Their morale and confidence can only be restored by convincing guarantees of US determination to protect them. There is no resolution of the Laos problem which can be visualized that would in itself provide these neighboring countries with the assurances which they will need to prevent their gradual accommodation to the Communist bloc.

Therefore, early in the Conference we must be prepared 1) to give written assurances and extensive aid in materiel and forces to protect Viet-Nam and 2) to negotiate a bilateral mutual defense agreement and increased aid for Thailand.

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At the Conference we must maintain positions which will enhance the security of Viet-Nam or Thailand rather than bring harm. We must make certain that control mechanisms, in the South at least, are effective and will prevent Communist advances there. Proposals for regroupment of PL forces must be arranged to remove their real or potential threat to Free Viet-Nam and Thailand.

The Communists likely will thrust Viet-Nam into the Conference discussions. If we cannot prevent this, counter these changes with a vigorous expose of DRV violations of the Geneva Accords and Communist attempts to seize Free Viet-Nam by force and terror. Free Viet-Nam's restraint in reprisals and gallant struggle should be related to any discussion on Viet-Nam.

We should use all media at the Conference to highlight our themes and proposals for a neutral Laos in order to offset any accentuation of our military efforts in Free Viet-Nam and Thailand.

3. How to rescue some advantage from this Conference—either by buying time or negotiating something acceptable?

We can seek an agreement with the Communists to withdraw Laos from the cold war. Since this is unlikely, we could then hope that the Communists would agree to negotiate suitable control mechanisms. These would retard a Communist take-over and provide a thin trip cord to trigger internationally-supported intervention into action if the Communists become careless and extravagant in the techniques they use to consolidate control in Laos.

Subjectively, we should be able to demonstrate new ideas and reasonableness in contrast to Communists' intransigence. This might help to rally support for international mechanisms elsewhere which can be perfected to prevent the Communists from such freedom of action in future moves against small countries of the world.

4. How to fit our strategies and tactics on this Conference into a frame of reference for Asia as a whole.

Our general themes and actions during the Conference should be directed at the Asian participants in an attempt to make them realize that a Communist take-over in Laos is not a U.S. problem but theirs. This transference of responsibility is impossible unless the Asians have an alternative to capitulation other than the might or vagaries of the U.S. or its "tainted" allies. The answer to this problem is probably an involvement of the UN and a bolstering of UN responsibilities and capabilities in Laos and its potential in the area. This theme will need developing and stressing during the Conference and thereafter.

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5. How to dovetail the Lao problem in with some sort of UN auspices?

UN involvement in the Laos problem probably is vital if we are to find a solution to our basic dilemma which has resulted in the disintegration of Laos. We visualize several possible places where the UN could be injected:

- 1) The Conference could be made responsible to the UN generally.
- 2) The ICC could be set up answerable to the UN and possibly financed by the UN.
- 3) Military assistance could be channeled through a UN group.
- 4) Economic and technical assistance could be funneled through, or supervised by, a UN body.
- 5) UN regional projects could be encouraged to incorporate Laos and to tie it with her neighbors.
- 6) Eventually a UN military force may be necessary to restore the cease-fire or to prevent the Communists from open or disguised aggression against Laos.

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